



The Columbia River Water Measurement Project

Ecology's Water Resources Program

One of the greatest challenges the Columbia River Water Resources Management Program faces is obtaining adequate data to make sound water resource management decisions. The Legislature directs Washington Department of Ecology (Ecology) to publish aggregate water measurement data on its web site by June 2009. Our goal is to encourage voluntary participation with Ecology's program in order to achieve measurement of 90 percent of surface and ground water diverted from the river within a one-mile corridor on each side of the Columbia River by June 2009. The cost of installing metering devices will be shared between water users and the state. Ecology has allocated \$1 million to assist water users with the cost of purchasing and installing meters or metering systems.

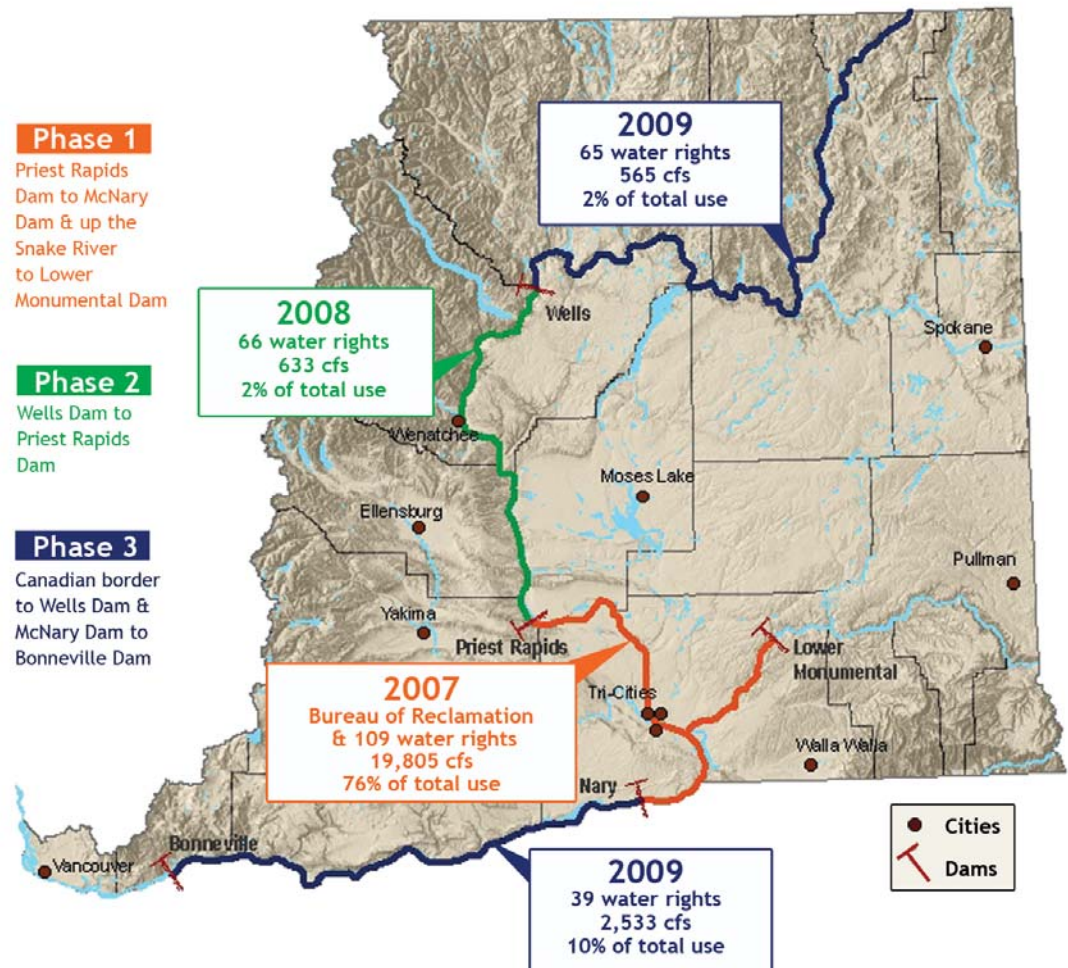
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The program's goal is to measure 90 percent of all Columbia River water use between the Canadian Border and Bonneville Dam by 2009. The project will be conducted in three phases:



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How will the Program conduct the project?

Ninety percent of the water allocated for Columbia River water rights is granted to a relatively small percentage of water right holders. At the beginning of each phase, the Program, through the conservation districts, will contact water rights holders within the targeted area, tell them about the project, and invite them to a metering workshop. Informational materials explaining the project will be made available through mailings and via the Program's web site and listserv.

Initially, Ecology will work to achieve voluntary compliance. Smaller water right holders will be allowed to participate in the project as resources allow.

Who will pay for metering?

The cost of installing meters will be shared between water right holders and the State. Ecology has reserved \$1 million to develop a cost-share grant program to be administered in cooperation with the Conservation Commission and local conservation districts. The amount of the share paid by the State varies depending on the type of meter installed. The State also pays a greater share of the cost in cases of verifiable financial hardship.

See Ecology's water use measurement web site for more information, <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/measuring/measuringhome.html>

What happens if I'm using more water than is permitted under my water right?

Because most water users only estimate their use, it is not uncommon for people to find they are using more water than they are permitted to use once a meter has been installed. Ecology is committed to providing technical assistance to help users comply with legal requirements.

Both Ecology and your local conservation districts have expertise in water conservation and water use efficiency that can help you decrease water use while continuing to meet crop needs. If you need more water rights to cover your uses, Ecology can assist you in understanding the options available for applying for a new water right or transferring an existing water right to cover your uses. Hopefully, improved water management practices will solve the problem. If not, Ecology must ensure you use only the amount of water for which you are permitted, at least until additional transfers or new water rights can be made available to meet your needs.

What happens if I'm using less water than is permitted under my water right?

It is also possible that metered water use will reveal that you use less water than is permitted under your water right. Water users have several options to consider:

1. Short-term reductions in water use (e.g. 5 years or less) are protected from *relinquishment*. *Relinquishment* occurs when a water right holder voluntarily uses less water for 5 or more years without sufficient cause. However, any decision by Ecology that a water right has relinquished is appealable to the Pollution Control Hearings Board. As long as you beneficially use your full permitted quantity at least once every 5 years, then metered water use in a particular year that shows less use is fine.
2. Prolonged reductions in water use are covered by 20 exemptions to relinquishment. The 20 exemptions can be found in RCW 90.14.140, and include occurrences like drought, crop rotation and enrolling in Ecology trust water program.

What will Ecology do with the metering data?

Ecology is required to publish aggregate metering data on its website by 2009.

If you need this publication in an alternate format, please call the Columbia River Water resources Management Program at (509) 575-2490. Persons with hearing loss can call 711 for Washington Relay Service. Persons with a speech disability can call 877-833-6341.